

Tommy Holloway

By Lisa Tidwell



Thirty-nine years ago, a new NASA engineer named Tommy Holloway stood outside of the old Mercury Mission Control in Florida.

As he watched Mercury 9 lift off with Gordon Cooper inside, Holloway's perspective about the space program forever changed.

"That was the first moment I realized that there was a human in there – a human with a mother, a father, a wife and a child," Holloway said at the STS-111/Expedition 4 postflight event in June.

At that event, the retiring International Space Station (ISS) Manager reminisced about his years of service to the U.S. Space Program. He also was presented the Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medal by NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe.

Holloway was named ISS Manager in April 1999 after serving as the Space Shuttle Program Manager for nearly four years. He began his career with NASA in 1963, planning activities for Gemini and Apollo flights at what was then known as the Manned Spacecraft Center. He was a Flight Director in Mission Control for early space shuttle flights and became Chief of the office in 1985.

In 1989, he was named Assistant Director for the Space Shuttle Program for the Mission Operations Directorate. He served as Deputy Manager for Program Integration with the Space Shuttle Program and Director of the Phase I Program of Shuttle-Mir dockings before being named Space Shuttle Program Manager in 1995.

While his achievements are exceptional and his awards are numerous, Holloway leaves behind more than those accolades.

His legacy is one of genuine concern for people. From that day he watched the Mercury 9 launch to his retirement last month, Holloway never lost sight of the space program's human element.

Holloway consistently infused his core values of safety, trust, integrity, respect for people and technical excellence into every aspect of his work.

"Tommy Holloway's unique experience and ability to excel in the performance of human spaceflight is a talent this Agency will miss," said Bill Gerstenmaier, who served as Holloway's Deputy and now heads the ISS Program. "His accomplishments are gigantic, and his honesty and decency are unparalleled."

Throughout his impressive career spanning four decades, Holloway saw many firsts at NASA, such as Ed White's first space walk, Apollo's first lunar flyby, the first human to walk on the surface of the Moon, Skylab, the first shuttle flight, the first docking of the Shuttle-Mir and the creation of the International Space Station.

When named the ISS Program Manager, Holloway was challenged with putting thousands of pieces of hardware into orbit, coordinating the activities of NASA's 16 international partners and managing about 20,000 personnel in the United States.

He met that challenge, as he did so many others in his career, and leaves NASA with an ISS Program possessing an impeccable safety record that successfully flew 24 missions in 24 months under his watch.

Paying tribute to Holloway, O'Keefe described the ISS as the "House that Tommy built." However, at that postflight event, Holloway didn't focus on his own achievements but rather those of the entire NASA family.

"To all of you in human spaceflight, be proud," he said. "You are a great team." ❖

